

## BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

### ON

## SQUADRON OFFICER SCHOOL

### PURPOSE

This BBP will outline the why, how, and what for the design of a 5-week SOS in-residence course with a desired end state of making Captains better leaders and thinkers.

### DISCUSSION

- Why – SOS will transform AF Captains from skilled operators to forward-thinking, professional leaders capable of leading Airmen through evolving challenges
- How – SOS “How?” Loop; modified Experiential Learning Theory Learning Model
  - Students are exposed to concepts
  - Students apply concepts repeatedly in dynamic, challenging environments and grow individually and as a team through real-time debriefs and structured introspection
  - End state is internalization of concepts
  - All aspects of curriculum facilitated through lens of evolving challenges
- What – Seven core concepts taught through 18 academic lessons to develop leaders who think, communicate, and cooperate
  - Think- Critical Thinking (Framework for Critical Thinking, Innovation, Strategic Thinking); Strategy & Doctrine (U.S. Strategy & Doctrine, AF Strategy & Doctrine, International Security Systems); Values & Ethics (Philosophy Review)
  - Communicate- Effective Communication (Professional Communication, Influence & Power, Cross-Culture Communication, Negotiation)
  - Cooperate- Leadership (Full-Range Leadership, Effective Debrief, Feedback); Teambuilding (Teambuilding Basics); Joint & Combined Relationships (Joint Operations, Civil/Military Cooperation, Combined Operations)
- Academics
  - Graduate-level review of core concepts. Assigned academic readings limited to one hour/night with focus on case study, debate, or role-play scenario following each lesson

- Student-led learning by teaching. Students teach 14 of 18 academic lessons. Two students/assigned lesson. SOS provides lesson objectives & teaching guide. Flight CC vectoring & feedback.
- Lecture Series: 1) Hero/Core Values; 2) Operational Lessons Learned; 3) Senior Leadership Perspectives; 4) Foreign Policy Experts; 5) Sister Service/Other Agency Leadership Perspectives. No more than 2 lectures/week.
- Leadership Olympics
  - Maintain competitive flight structure to provide common purpose for individual motivation
  - Each student assigned as POC for one of six types of physical and mental challenges that contribute to flight standing: 1) Project X; 2) FLEX; 3) Team Challenges; 4) ADWAR; 5) Flight Think Tank; 6) Negotiation/Debate.
    - Student responsible for planning/organizing flight to successfully complete challenges
    - Student briefs action plan to Flight CC, leads debrief of flight following challenge, and receives feedback from Flight CC. Follow-up action plan delivered before next event.
    - Effective debrief and introspection are key to student completing experiential learning loop. Multiple opportunities to serve as leader require individual and team adaptation as well as application of strengths and weaknesses.
  - Modified team challenges:
    - Project X- Four Project X days/flight (16 total events)
    - FLEX- Two practice matches, three matches for points, 1 field day tournament
    - ADWAR- Two ADWAR events
    - Team Challenges- Six real-world indoor/outdoor challenges
  - New team challenges:
    - Flight Think Tank- Every Captain in AF needs “Think Tank” to develop team approach to strategic thinking
    - Each squadron will have a different real-world strategic problem and assigned mentor/SME available in person or by phone
    - Two seven-student groups/flight combined after two weeks to brief Sq/CC. One flight/Sq selected to brief SOC/CC. SOC/CC selects brief(s) for AF leaders.

- Negotiation/Debate- One cross-cultural negotiation and one debate
- Additional SOS Components
  - Introspection and Individual Development
    - Journaling to enable structured introspection
    - Personal Leadership Development Plan completed in fifth week to facilitate continued focus on leadership development after graduation
    - Promotion Board Exercise
    - Optional AFSC-specific mentoring
  - Individual Assignments
    - “My AFSC Story” brief
    - “Think Tank” critical analysis BBP
    - Two student-led academic lessons
    - “ADWAR” AF doctrine brief
    - Two student-leader action plans
  - O-4 Flight CCs to enhance experience level and credibility of instructors facilitating academics and experiential learning

## RECOMMENDATION

Re-design the 5-week SOS in-residence course to graduate Captains prepared and motivated to lead Airmen into the future.